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THE LIBYAN MENACE

by John K. Cooley

Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi, considered by some to be a great Arab leader and by many others to be an international scourge, is at least in part an American responsibility. U.S. interests had much to do with creating the conditions for Qaddafi's seizure of power in Libya in 1969. Later, those same interests gave him at least the appearance of American protection, allowing the Libyan leader to develop his ability to use and abuse that power. Participating in this extraordinary disservice to long-term U.S. interests were top officials of the Defense and State departments, leaders of the U.S. oil industry, active and retired agents of the Central Intelligence Agency, contractors with close ties to U.S. officials, and relatives of former President Jimmy Carter. Because various segments of U.S. society at different times played the role they did, U.S. policy makers can scarcely shirk the now pressing responsibility of coping with Qaddafi's messianic desire to spread his revolution far beyond Libya's desert frontiers.

When he seized power, Qaddafi's fiercely anticommunist ideology as well as his anti-Soviet words and deeds indicated to U.S. policy makers that he would be a useful asset in North Africa. Qaddafi and his young associates in the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) were determined to eradicate Western bases and political influence in the Arab world and were opposed to Israel's existence. Yet they showed no more inclination to grant the Soviets air or naval facilities than had Libya's royal government in the 1950s.

Moscow tried unsuccessfully to soften Qaddafi's anti-Soviet outpourings by praising the ephemeral, paper union of Egypt, Libya, and Sudan as "an anti-imperialist force in the Arab world." Nevertheless, after the death of former

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coup's leaders and handing him over to Nimeiry to be hanged.

The Nixon administration was pleased when Qaddafi denounced the Soviet role in the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war as "conforming to Soviet imperialist designs in the area." Qaddafi also criticized the Soviet-Iraqi treaty of April 1972, although he had signed an accord on economic and technical cooperation with the Soviets a month earlier. Qaddafi also appears to have approved Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat's expulsion of the Soviet military advisers from Egypt in July 1972.

Qaddafi's Adventures

Along with Qaddafi's anticommunism, however, went a bewildering series of foreign adventures that the Nixon administration, using anticommunism as its only litmus test, seemed to overlook. Some of these foreign adventures involved outright support for terrorism. Many others threatened Western strategic, political, or economic interests. Qaddafi has always maintained that the entire Arab world must finally unite and wipe Israel off the map. At various times he has supported—with promises, cash, or arms—the Moro National Liberation Front in the southern Philippines; the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland; Basque, Corsican, and other separatists throughout Europe; the leftists in the Lebanese civil war; Somalia and the Eritrean nationalists against Ethiopia (later switching his support to Ethiopia after Libya became a strategic ally of the Soviets); liberation movements in Angola and Mozambique; the most radical, black factions in Zimbabwe and South Africa; and the Black Muslims in the United States. Qaddafi also provided shelter for the Palestinian terrorists who attacked the Israeli team at the September 1972 Munich Olympic games, and

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